



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (AfL)

Ko Ai Boi

**Master of Science
(Learning Sciences)
2015**

**LB
3051
K75
2015**

Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Ko Ai Boi

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science (Learning Sciences)**


Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

2015

The dissertation entitled **Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment for Learning (AfL)** was prepared by Ko Ai Boi and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science (Learning Sciences).

It is hereby confirm that the student has done all necessary
amendments for examination and acceptance.


.....

(Associate Professor Dr. Hasbee Hj Usop)

Date:

05 June 2015

GRED

A

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

Grade: _____

Please tick (✓)

Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>


DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL WORK

This declaration is made on the 05 day of June 2015.

Student's Declaration:

I, Ko Ai Boi, 14030086, FCSHD hereby declare that the work entitled, Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment for Learning (AFL) is my original work. I have not copied from any other students' work or from any other sources except where due reference or acknowledgement is made explicitly in the text, nor has any part been written for me by another person.

05 June 2015



Ko Ai Boi (14030086)

Supervisor's Declaration:

I, Associate Professor Dr. Hasbee Hj Usop hereby certifies that the work entitled, Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment for Learning (AFL) was prepared by the above named student, and was submitted to the "FACULTY" as a * partial/full fulfillment for the conferment of degree of Master of Science (Learning Sciences), and the aforementioned work, to the best of my knowledge, is the said student's work

Received for examination by:  Date: 05 June 2015
(Associate Professor Dr. Hasbee Hj Usop)


I declare this Project/Thesis is classified as (Please tick (✓)):

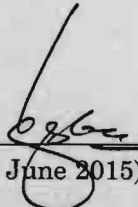
- ☐ **CONFIDENTIAL** (Contains confidential information under the Official Secret Act 1972)*
☐ **RESTRICTED** (Contains restricted information as specified by the organization where research was done)*
☒ **OPEN ACCESS**

Validation of Project/Thesis

I therefore duly affirmed with free consent and willingness declared that this said Project/Thesis shall be placed officially in the Centre for Academic Information Services with the abide interest and rights as follows:

- This Project/Thesis is the sole legal property of University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to make copies for the purpose of academic and research only and not for other purpose.
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to digitize the content to for the Local Content Database.
- The Centre for Academic Information Services has the lawful right to make copies of the Project/Thesis for academic exchange between Higher Learning Institute.
- No dispute or any claim shall arise from the student itself neither third party on this Project/Thesis once it becomes sole property of UNIMAS.
- This Project/Thesis or any material, data and information related to it shall not be distributed, published or disclosed to any party by the student except with UNIMAS permission.

Student's signature 
(05 June 2015)

Supervisor's signature: 
(05 June 2015)

Current Address: 199, Lot 1173, Lrg Lapangan Terbang 5F, Jln Lapangan Terbang 5, 93350 Kuching, Sarawak

Notes: * If the Project/Thesis is **CONFIDENTIAL** or **RESTRICTED**, please attach together as annexure a letter from the organization with the period and reasons of confidentiality and restriction.

[The instrument was duly prepared by The Centre for Academic Information Services]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am greatly indebted to a number of people for their support and tireless guidance throughout this work. I would like to thank God first for holding me firm, without God I am nothing.

My heartfelt thanks go to my supervisor, Associated Professor Dr. Hasbee Hj Usop for his constant professional guidance, patience and encouragement in pursuance of my goal. I would also like to thank Dr. Hong Kian Sam for his suggestions and constructive criticisms. Thank you for the encouragement.

I would also like to thank the course coordinator, Mr Hafizan Hashim who kept on monitoring my progress to make sure I was making good progress and that my interest and energy were not shifted to something else. Thank you Mr Hafizan Hashim, you gave me the drive to move on.

My thanks also go to the principals of SM Sains Kuching, SMK Seri Setia and SMK Sungai Tapang for allowing me to conduct my research on the teachers in their school. I would like to thank the teachers of SM Sains Kuching, SMK Seri Setia and SMK Sungai Tapang for their support and willingness to participate in this research.

I gratefully acknowledge all the assistance given to me in this study by the teachers I worked with; and Cik Rafika for drafting the letter, which I took with me to the schools. My sincere thanks go to the Education Planning and Research Division of Ministry of Education for allowing me to carry out the study in the three schools.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for the hardship they had to go through in my absence. To those I have not mentioned here I say many thanks.

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
Lists of tables	vii
List of figures	viii
Abstract	ix
Abstrak	x
 Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	2
1.2 Statement of Problem	5
1.3 Research Objectives	6
1.4 Research Questions	7
1.5 Research Hypotheses	7
1.6 Research Framework	8
1.7 Definitions of Terms	
1.7.1 Assessment for Learning (AfL)	8
1.7.2 Perception	9
1.7.3 Teacher	10
1.8 Significance of the Study	10
1.9 Limitations of the Study	11
1.10 Summary	12
 2 LITERATURE REVIEWS	
2.0 Introduction	13
2.1 Assessment	14
2.2 Assessment for Learning (AfL)	16
2.3 Advantages of AfL	20
2.4 Disadvantages of AfL	22
2.5 Challenges of AfL	23
2.6 Teachers' Perceptions towards AfL	24
2.7 Teachers' Perception based on Demographic Variable	
2.7.1 Teachers' Perception towards AfL based on Gender	26
2.7.2 Teachers' Perception towards AfL based on Teaching Experiences	27
2.8 Summary	28
 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.0 Introduction	30
3.1 Research Design	30
3.2 Research Samples	31

3.3	Research Instrument	31
3.4	Pilot Study	32
3.5	Data Collection Procedures	33
3.6	Data Analyses	34
3.7	Ethical Issues	34
3.8	Summary	35
4	RESEARCH FINDINGS	
4.0	Introduction	36
4.1	Demographics of the Respondents	36
4.2	Reliability Analysis of the Research Instruments	39
4.3	Descriptive Statistics for Teachers' Perception on the Ten Principles of AfL	39
4.4	Differences in Teachers' Perceptions on the Principles of AfL based on Demographic Variables	48
4.5	Summary	49
5	DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	
5.0	Introduction	50
5.1	Summary of the Study	50
5.2	Summary of Findings	
5.2.1	Teachers' Perceptions of AfL Principles and Principles that Teachers Have Difficulties With	52
5.2.2	Differences of Teachers' Perceptions based on Demographic Variables	53
5.3	Discussion of Findings	
5.3.1	Teachers' Perceptions of AfL Principles and Difficulties Faced	53
5.3.2	Gender Differences on Teachers' AfL Perceptions	58
5.3.3	Teacher Experiences and Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of AfL Principles	59
5.4	Recommendation for Practice	60
5.5	Recommendation for Future Research	62
5.6	Conclusion	64
	REFERENCES	65
	APPENDICES	
A	Instrument	73
B	Consent Letters	78

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
3.1	Reliability of the questionnaire in the pilot test	33
3.2	Statistical analyses of the research	34

4.1	Demographic of the respondents	38
4.2	Reliability of the questionnaire in the actual study	39
4.3	Descriptive Statistic for teachers' perception on ten principles of AfL	45
4.4	Difference in teachers' perceptions on the principles of AfL based on gender	48
4.5	Descriptive statistics and One-Way ANOVA results for differences in teachers' perceptions on the principles of AfL based teaching experiences .	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.1	Research Framework	8

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfL	Assessment for Learning
AIM	Agensi Inovasi Malaysia
AoL	Assessment of Learning
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EPRD	Educational Planning and Policy Research Division
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IB	International Baccalaureate
KMOFAP	King's, Medway, Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project
MOE	Ministry of Education
MYP	Middle Years Program
PISA	Program for International Students Assessment
PPP	Public – Private Partnership
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Studies
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

ABSTRACT

Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Assessment for Learning (AfL) is a worldwide initiative which is promoted to improve student learning. AfL refers to the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning. As AfL is a relatively new pedagogical approach in Malaysia, this study aimed to investigate the secondary school teachers' perceptions of Assessment for Learning (AfL). The influence of demographic factors such as gender and teaching experiences on teachers' perceptions were also investigated. The research design used in the study was a Cross-Sectional Survey with descriptive and parametric statistical analyses. The samples in this study consisted of 96 teachers in three Malaysian Government secondary schools in Sarawak, who had been trained with the AfL strategies. Independent t-test and one-way ANOVA test were used to determine the differences in teachers' perceptions of AfL based on gender and teaching experiences. The findings of this study showed that the teachers generally had positive perceptions of AfL. The study also found that there were no differences in teachers' perception based on gender and teaching experiences. The findings of these results provide insights into enhancing teachers' perceptions of AfL and their AfL practices in classroom.

Keywords: Assessment for Learning (AfL), perceptions, teacher

ABSTRAK

Persepsi Guru terhadap Penilaian untuk Pembelajaran (AfL)

Penilaian untuk Pembelajaran (AfL) merupakan inisiatif di seluruh dunia yang dipromosikan untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran pelajar. AFL merujuk kepada proses mencari dan mentafsir bukti yang akan digunakan oleh pelajar dan guru-guru mereka bagi tujuan membuat keputusan di mana pelajar dalam pembelajaran mereka. Disebabkan AfL adalah pendekatan pedagogi yang agak baru di Malaysia, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji persepsi guru-guru sekolah menengah mengenai Penilaian untuk Pembelajaran (AfL). Pengaruh faktor-faktor demografi seperti jantina dan pengalaman mengajar terhadap persepsi guru turut dikaji. Rekabentuk kajian yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah Survei Keratan Rentas dengan analisis statistik deskriptif dan parameter. Sampel dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada 96 guru dari tiga sekolah menengah Kerajaan Malaysia di Sarawak, yang telah dilatih dengan strategi AfL. Ujian-t tidak bersandar dan ujian satu-hala ANOVA digunakan untuk menentukan perbezaan dalam persepsi guru terhadap AfL berdasarkan jantina dan pengalaman mengajar. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru secara umumnya mempunyai persepsi yang positif AfL. Kajian ini juga mendapati tidak terdapat perbezaan dalam persepsi guru berdasarkan jantina dan pengalaman mengajar. Hasil keputusan ini dapat menyumbangkan maklumat yang untuk meningkatkan persepsi guru terhadap AfL dan amalan AfL mereka di dalam kelas.

Kata kunci: *Penilaian untuk Pembelajaran (AfL), Persepsi, Guru*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into nine main sections. Section 1.1 discusses the background of the study. Section 1.2 provides the problem statement of this study. Section 1.3 lists the research objectives of the study. Section 1.4 provides the research questions of the study. This is followed by Section 1.5 which discusses the research hypotheses of the study. The next section, Section 1.6 gives an overall view of the research through the research framework of the study. Section 1.7 provides the conceptual and operational definitions of the relevant terms used in this study. Section 1.8 discusses the significance and the importance of the study. This is then followed by Section 1.9, which lists the limitations of this study. Lastly, Section 1.10 summarizes the chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

‘Assessment of learning’ (AoL) is the most common type of assessment which utilizes grades or symbols to present students’ learning to the public (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, 2006). Problem with AoL arises when the test scores are expected to go up without any improvements in students learning (Stiggins, 2002). To alleviate the problems related to AoL, ‘Assessment for Learning’ (AfL) has been highlighted and promoted in the education reforms of many countries such as the Hong Kong, Singapore, United States of America and United Kingdom in recent decades (So & Lee, 2011; Song & Koh, 2012; Stiggins, 2002; William, Lee, Harrison, & Black, 2004;).

AfL is an everyday process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners, teachers and peers to enhance ongoing learning (Valentina, 2009). AfL can be used to promote learning by providing students with the opportunity to assess their own work and learning progress based on feedback to various kinds of information such as dialogue, demonstration and observation.

In addition, AfL is also a day-to-day pedagogical approach which is imperative in bringing about students’ mastery of 21st century competencies and lifelong learning. According to Song and Koh (2012), AfL in the classroom practices enables a shift in focus from rote learning of core subjects to the mastery of higher order thinking skills which is crucial for 21st century skills, knowledge and competencies.

In Malaysia, the Malaysian government has introduced the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Ministry of Education, 2012) to transform the education system. This is in part due to the declining Malaysian students' performance in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) assessments. The Malaysian Education Blueprint has given emphasis on developing students' higher order thinking skills, which is crucial for Malaysia to become a competent developed nation in the 21st century (Ministry of Education, 2012). In addressing this need, the Ministry of Education has also called for greater Public – Private Partnership (PPP) in the education sector as an effort to transform the education system (www.khazanah.com.my/docs/10Dec2010_TrustSchool_statement.pdf, 2010).

As part of the PPP initiatives, Yayasan Amir started implementing the Trust School model in 2011 (www.khazanah.com.my/docs/10Dec2010_TrustSchool_statement.pdf, 2010), while Agensi Inovasi Malaysia (AIM) adopted and implemented the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program (MYP) (*IB program to be carried out in 10 schools*, 2013) to ten Malaysian government schools in the year 2013.

These projects intend to explore new pedagogical approaches to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, as outlined in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025. Thus, both the Trust School model and the IB Middle Years Program implement AfL as one of its teaching strategies (LeadEd, 2011; <http://www.ibo.org/contentassets/2470e1b3d2dc4b8281649bc45b52a00f/approachestolearningeng.pdf>, 2012).

A study conducted by William, Lee, Harrison, and Black (2004) showed that an improvement in the grade per student per subject of approximately one-half for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades when teachers made time to develop AfL strategies. Therefore, it would appear that AfL improves students' achievement in standardized testing (Collins, 2012; Glasson, 2008; Growing Success, 2010; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005)

Besides contributing towards improvement in students' performance, the use of AfL also narrows the achievement gap between low and high performers. Stiggins and Chappuis (2005) citing evidences from past studies state that AfL via sound classroom assessment processes produces significant academic improvement in school and reduces score gaps, especially among low performers. Hence, this seems to imply that in classroom practising AfL, teachers improve in their teaching and reduce achievement score gaps among students.

Furthermore, AfL also motivates and improves students' behavior in learning. Ross, Siegenthaler, and Tronson (2006) discovered that students showed a strong motivational impetus to learning after this assessment practices in Biology 1. In addition, students who are motivated do not usually present their teachers with challenging behavior (Wolstenholme, n.d). Hence, motivation in learning can be developed and behavior will improve through developing AfL practices.

Besides the impact of AfL on the students, AfL also impacts on teachers. AfL improves teachers' professionalism and teaching practices (Flórez & Sammons, 2013). Teachers change their role in the classroom interaction, from a content deliverer to a moderator and facilitator of learning. All the King's, Medway, Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP) teachers reported that they think of their teaching in terms of facilitating students' learning rather than covering the curriculum at all cost (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2003).

However, AfL as a pedagogical approach is relatively new to Malaysian teachers. Teachers' perceptions should be considered to implement a new pedagogical approach successfully in Malaysia classrooms. Nasri, Roslan, Sekuan, Bakar, and Puteh (2010) stated that teachers' perception should be taken in consideration before incorporating any alternative assessment. Teachers will support the assessment and ensure the alternative assessment succeeded in reality when they have positive perceptions on alternative assessment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

AfL is a worldwide education initiative, which has increasingly become a topic of discussion in recent years (Ross, Siegenthaler, & Tronson, 2006; So & Lee, 2011; Song & Koh, 2012; Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005; William et. al., 2004; Wolstenholme, n.d). The literature on AfL generally focuses on its advantages and the impact it has on student outcomes (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005; William et al., 2004) but do not explore in-depth on teachers' perceptions

about AfL practices. Teacher is the key in any educational reform (Flórez & Sammons, 2013). Moreover, what teachers teach and why they teach it are affected by teachers' beliefs and perceptions (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, teachers' perception should be taken into consideration when attempting to implement a new pedagogical approach in education.

AfL is a fairly new innovation pedagogical approach in the Malaysian educational system; and there is a lack of empirical studies that focuses on investigating teachers' perceptions on AfL at Malaysian secondary schools. Hence, this study aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions on the ten identified principles of AfL and also looked at differences on their perceptions based on gender and teaching experiences; and determined the principles of AfL which teachers might have difficulties with.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main research objective of this study was to investigate secondary school teachers' perceptions of the AfL pedagogical approach. Specifically, this study looked at the following research objectives:

RO1 – To ascertain teachers' perceptions on the principles of AfL

RO2 – To determine differences in teachers' perceptions on the principles of AfL based on gender

RO3 – To determine differences in teachers' perceptions on the principles of AfL based on teaching experiences

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated in this study based on the research objectives stated previously:

- RO1 – What were the teachers’ perceptions on the principles of AfL?
- RO2 –Were there any differences in teachers’ perceptions on the principles of AfL based on gender?
- RO3 –Were there any differences in teachers’ perceptions on the principles of AfL based on teaching experiences?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following were the research hypotheses of the study:

- H₀1 – There were no differences in teachers’ perceptions on the principles of AfL based on gender.
- H₀2 – There were no differences in teachers’ perceptions on the principles of AfL based on teaching experiences.

1.6 Research Framework

Figure 1.1 shows the research framework of this study outlining the main independent and dependent variables.

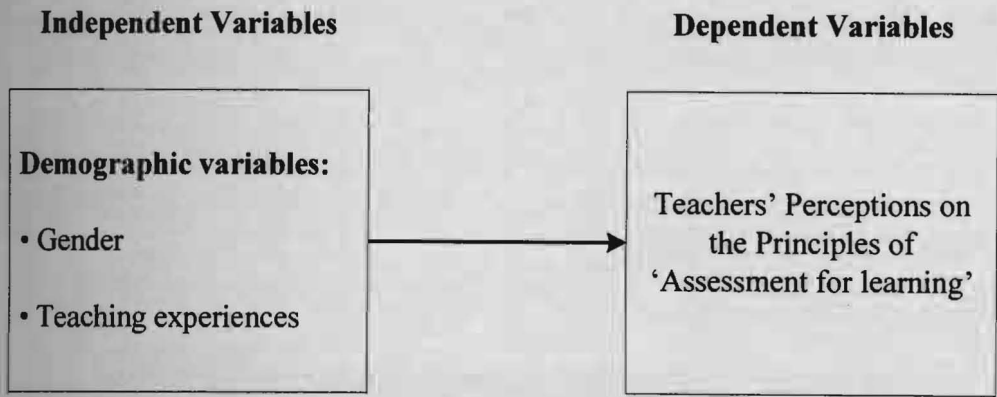


Figure 1.1 Research Framework

1.7 Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, some of the specific terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1.7.1 Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Conceptual Definition

AfL has been defined as “part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers that seeks, reflects upon and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration and observation in ways that enhance ongoing learning” (Valentina, 2009, p.2).

Operational Definition

In this study, AfL referred to the “usually informal, embedded in all aspects of teaching and learning, and conducted by different teachers as part of their own diverse and individual teaching styles” (Black et al., 2003, p.2). AfL principles investigated in this study were AfL is part of effective planning, AfL is central to classroom practice, AfL promotes understanding of goals and criteria, AfL is sensitive and constructive, AfL fosters motivation, AfL learning’ recognizes the full range of achievement of all learners, AfL focuses on how students learn, AfL helps learners know how to improve, AfL develops the capacity for self – assessment and AfL is a key professional skill (Broadfoot, Daugherty, Gardner, Harlen, James & Stobart, 2002).

1.7.2 Perception

Conceptual Definition

Perception has been defined by Fowler and Fowler (1964) as the action by which the mind refers its sensations to external object as cause.

Operational Definition

In this study, perception is referred to as a belief that one has as a result of how one understands something (Lea et al., 2014, p. 588), indicating teachers’ belief about AfL and AfL practices.

1.7.3 Teacher

Conceptual Definition

Teacher has been defined by Lea et al. (2014) as a person whose job is to teach, especially in school.

Operational Definition

In this study, a teacher was a person who worked under the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) and teaches in a Malaysian Government secondary school.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Research investigating secondary school teachers' perceptions of AfL is still lacking in Malaysia. Therefore, the findings of this study would uncover specific teachers' perceptions of the AfL pedagogical approach.

Besides, the findings of this study could also inform the school leaders and policy makers on the need to focus on these perceptions in the intellectual work of change in teachers' classroom assessment practices.

Moreover, the findings of the study could also be used as references for future researchers who would like to conduct further investigations on teachers' perceptions of AfL. It would

provide a basis for understanding of how teacher perceived AfL, a new innovative pedagogical approach in their teaching practices.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The respondents in this study were secondary school teachers from two Trust schools and a secondary school implementing IB MYP program and the teachers had been trained with the AfL pedagogical approach. Therefore, the results of the study might not be representative of the entire population of teachers in government and other types of schools in the country.

Furthermore, the research was conducted in only three secondary schools, SM Sains Kuching, SMK Seri Setia and SMK Sungai Tapang. SM Sains Kuching and SMK Seri Setia were the pioneer secondary schools in Sarawak under the Trust School program since 2010; whereas SMK Sungai Tapang was the pioneer secondary school in Sarawak under IB MYP programs since 2013. The result of the study might not be representative of the entire population of schools in the country.

Moreover, these three secondary schools were urban schools in Kuching and Kota Samarahan districts of Sarawak. Thus, the results of the study might not accurately reflect the existing teacher and students contexts of other schools in Malaysia.

Besides, the demographic variables studied in this study were also limited to gender and teaching experiences. Other factors such as subject taught and academic background which might also have an impact on secondary school teachers' perceptions of AfL were not considered in this study. Also, there were limitations in the ratio of male to female teachers in this study. There were more female compared to male teachers for this study. The bias in genders might have an impact on the research findings.

In addition, this study only used questionnaires to collect the required data. Other sources of data such as observations and interviews which were excluded in this study might be able to provide additional data which could give better understanding of the problems investigated in this study.

1.10 Summary

This chapter discussed the background of the study, problem statement of the study, research objectives, research questions, research hypotheses and research framework of the study. It concluded with the significance and limitations of the study and defined the conceptual and operational definitions of important terms used in the study. The next chapter discusses the literature review and past research relevant to the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into six main sections. Section 2.1 gives a brief definition about assessment. Section 2.2 discusses ‘assessment for learning’ including the definitions and the principles. The next section, Section 2.3 covers the advantages of ‘assessment for learning’. Section 2.4 provides the disadvantages of ‘assessment for learning’, followed by Section 2.5 discusses on the challenges of ‘assessment for learning’ to teachers. Section 2.6 discusses on the teachers’ perceptions of ‘assessment for learning. The following section, Section 2.7 provides the teachers’ perceptions of ‘assessment for learning’ based on demographic variables such as gender and teaching experiences. Lastly, Section 2.6 summarizes the literature review and how it contributed to the study.